

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PORT O 02450 222058Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1155
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE PORT OF SPAIN 2450

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, ELAB, TD
SUBJECT: SHAH NAMED TO SUCCEED PANDAY AS LEADER OF THE
OPPOSITION

REF: PORT OF SPAIN 2338

1. SUMMARY. THE FIRST PHASE OF THE CURRENT LEADERSHIP
STRUGGLE WITHIN THE UNITED LABOR FRONT (ULF) CAME TO AN
END AUGUST 19 WITH THE APPOINTMENT OF RAFFIQUE SHAH TO
REPLACE BASDEO PANDAY AS LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION. ALTHOUGH
SHAH HAS WON THE IMMEDIATE BATTLE, IT IS FAR FROM CLEAR
THAT HE CAN WIN THE WAR, SINCE PANDAY APPEARS TO RETAIN
BROAD RANK-AND-FILE SUPPORT. BOTH FUNCTIONS APPARENTLY ARE
AGREED NOW THA THE LEADERSHIP ISSUE ULTIMATELY MUST BE
SETTLED BY A PARTY CONGRESS, WHICH IS EXPECTED TO TAKE
PLACE BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR. WHICHEVER WAY THAT
CONGRESS EVENTUALLY DECIDES, HOWEVER, IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT
THE ULF WILL BE WEAKENED, IN THE SHORT RUN AT LEAST, IN
ITS ROLE AS TRINIDAD'S MAJOR OPPOSITION PARTY. END
SUMMARY.

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2. FOLLOWING TEN DAYS OF INTENSIVE ACTIVITY BY THE
WARRING PANDAY AND SHAH FACTIONS WITHIN THE ULF, RAFFIQUE
SHAH WAS NAMED OFFICIALLY AUGUST 19 BY PRESIDENT ELLIS
CLARKE TO TAKE OVER IMMEDIATELY AS LEADER OF THE OPPO-
SITION. CLARKE'S ACTION, WHICH FOLLOWED HIS RECEIPT OF
LETTERS OF NO-CONFIDENCE IN PANDAY FROM 6 OF THE 10 ULF

REPRESENTATIVES IN PARLIAMENT, ENDS PANDAY'S TERM AS LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION BUT APPARENTLY LEAVES UN-DIMINISHED HIS POLITICAL BACKING FROM THE POWERFUL SUGAR-WORKERS' UNION AND SOME OTHER ULF SUPPORTERS. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES ARE THE RESULT IN PART OF PERSONALITIES AND IN PART OF IDEOLOGICAL DISAGREEMENTS, BUT LOCAL OBSERVERS ARE UNABLE TO GIVE THE PROPORTIONS FOR EACH ELEMENT.

3. SINCE PANDAY'S DISMISSAL BY THE ULF CENTRAL COMMITTEE AUGUST 9 (SEE REFTEL), BOTH HE AND SHAH HAVE BEEN ACTIVELY COURTING THE PARTY'S MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS. WHILE IT IS DIFFICULT TO ASSESS THE IMPACT OF SUCH EFFORTS, THE PUBLIC IMPRESSION AT LEAST HAS BEEN THAT PANDAY HAS RETAINED HIS OWN NATURAL CONSTITUENCY AND MADE SOME HEADWAY AMONG SHAH'S BACKERS, WHEREAS SHAH HIMSELF HAS HAD DIFFICULTIES IN EXPLAINING CONVINCINGLY PANDAY'S OUSTER. INDEED, SHAH HAS BEEN FORCED TO ACCEPT ONE IMPORTANT POINT THAT HIS RIVAL HAS BEEN MAKING SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE LEADERSHIP STRUGGLE, I.E., THAT ULTIMATELY A PARTY CONGRESS WILL HAVE TO DECIDE THE ISSUE. PRESENT INDICATIONS ARE THAT SUCH A CONGRESS, THE FIRST SINCE THE FORMATION OF THE ULF, WILL BE CONVENED BEFORE THE END OF 1977.

4. PRESS-COVERAGE OF THE PANDAY-SHAH STRUGGLE HAS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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APPEARED DAILY AND BEEN EXTENSIVE. BOTH FACTIONS HAVE KEPT TO THEIR BASIC POSITIONS THROUGHOUT (SEE REFTEL), WHILE ELABORATING ON THEM AND ESCALATING THE RHETORIC TO SOME EXTENT. WHILE THE LOCAL PRESS IS NOT NOTABLY PRO-ULF, EDITORIAL OPINION HAS LAMENTED THE PARTY SPLIT AS INEVITABLY LESSENING THE CHANCES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRINIDAD'S FIRST EFFECTIVE OPPOSITION PARTY SINCE INDEPENDENCE. HAVING IN MIND THAT PREVIOUS OPPOSITION PARTIES HAVE HAD A RACIAL (EAST INDIAN) BASIS, A SECONDARY EDITORIAL THEME HAS BEEN THAT THE POWER STRUGGLE WILL UNDERMINE THE HOPES OF AFRICAN-INDIAN SOLIDARITY WHICH THE ULF HAD BEGUN TO FOSTER.

5. COMMENT. NOW THAT SHAH HAS ACHIEVED HIS IMMEDIATE GOAL OF OUSTING PANDAY AND TAKING OVER THE ULF LEADERSHIP IN PARLIAMENT, IT IS DIFFICULT TO SAY HOW MUCH HIS "VICTORY" WILL BE WORTH OR HOW LONG IT WILL LAST. IT IS CLEAR THAT PANDAY RETAINS WIDESPREAD SUPPORT AMONG THE PARTY'S RANK AND FILE, AND HE IS CONTINUING TO GIVE THEM HIS SIDE OF THE STORY IN WELL-PUBLICIZED PUBLIC MEETINGS. SHOULD SHAH SEEK TO PRESS HIS PRESENT TACTICAL ADVANTAGE TOO FAR, HE WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY RUN

THE RISK OF SHATTERING THE ULF, SOMETHING THAT BOTH
HE AND PANDAY PROFESS TO BE SEEKING TO AVOID. IF THE
LEADERSHIP ISSUE IS EVENTUALLY SETTLED BY A PARTY CON-
GRESS, AS APPEARS TO BE ACCEPTED BY BOTH FACTIONS NOW,
IT IS FAR FROM CLEAR THAT SHAH WILL RETAIN HIS NEWLY-
WON POSITION. INDEED, THE BIG WINNER THUS FAR IS THE
RULING PEOPLE'S NATIONAL MOVEMENT.
FOX

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
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Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 22-Aug-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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Disposition Remarks:
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